

Cotswolds LEADER Case Study – Bathurst Estate (Earls Fund)

The Bathurst Estate contains one of the largest woodlands in Gloucestershire. It forms part of a registered parkland, is open to the public and contains key ecological habitats. The woodland has a long history of management but a lack of equipment was limiting the forestry team's ability to work efficiently. The Estate successfully applied to Cotswolds LEADER to help with the purchase of a forestry tractor, forwarding trailer with crane, winch and a firewood processor. Forestry operations are guided by a Woodland Management Plan, which is approved by the Forestry Commission. The new equipment will feed into the next Woodland Management plan.

The new equipment has allowed neglected areas of the woodland to be accessed and brought into positive management. This includes a schedule of thinning, reducing canopy cover and allowing more light into the woodland. This will aid natural regeneration and benefit a range of species. It also includes ride widening, which increases the life of the forest track and is very beneficial to wildlife. Most woodlands in the Cotswolds are small in size so the active management of such a sizeable woodland is highly desirable from a conservation perspective.



The investment has enabled the Estate to take a number of activities in house, thus reducing the need for contractors and saving money. The Estate intends to gradually increase the volume of firewood sales over the next few years and the new equipment has significantly increased productivity in this area. As well as firewood, the thinning operation produces bio-mass fuel that is sold locally. The Estate has also accessed a new market for the sale of ash timber to manufacture Hurley sticks.

A number of additional benefits have arisen as a result of the investment:

- It has made the working day much safer and easier.
- The forestry team has benefitted from extensive training.
- Improved access has facilitated an increase in deer management that will in turn improve the success rate of newly planted trees and aid natural regeneration.
- The equipment has been particularly helpful in periods of bad weather to clear windblown timber from the parkland.

Increasingly we need to seek more local solutions for meeting our energy needs. Wood energy as part of an overall renewable energy response to climate change plays a vital part in this, bringing energy production into the local economy. Sustainably managing the woodland resource going forwards will be critical to a thriving wood energy industry. The UK is already a world leader in sustainable management of its forests and evidence of sustainable sourcing for wood fuel is now being built into the governments' Renewable Heat Incentive payments scheme.



All Photos Credit The Bathurst Estate

The LEADER grant has allowed the Estate to purchase the best equipment to establish regular management of the woodland. The short term impact is improved efficiency and reduced costs. The long term ambition is for the fully equipped forestry team to be in a position to offer management services to adjoining woodland owner's as a new enterprise.

For more information on The Bathurst Estate visit: <https://www.bathurstestate.co.uk/forestry/logs/>



Cotswolds
LEADER
Programme

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